

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/11
Paper 11

Key messages

- Allocate an appropriate amount of time to each question depending on the number of marks.
- Plan answers, especially for **Question 1** part (d) and the essay, including an appropriate number of evaluative points.
- Include sociological detail in terms of theory and studies, especially in **Question 1** parts (c) and (d) and the essay.

General comments

The majority of candidates seemed prepared for the examination and were able to offer some accurate sociological knowledge. Although it was evident that most candidates had good sociological understanding and a good grasp of sociological concepts, only the better responses included accurate and well-applied research data. Many candidates included the names of sociologists in their answers, but often without accurate reference to their research or the studies discussed were not related to the question.

Some candidates demonstrated clear issues with timing spending too long on low scoring questions and then running out of time and leaving higher scoring essays incomplete.

The most successful answers usually had clear evidence of planning, for example through a brief summary of points that will be included on each side of an essay.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates had an understanding of an empty shell marriage being the sort of marriage where emotional feelings have gone and many related this to the marriage being broken. The best answers also recognised that in an empty shell marriage the couple continue to live together. Common errors were to define cohabitation, childlessness, separation, a marriage of convenience to obtain a green card or confuse empty shell with empty nest. A number of answers were too long, often because they spent time explaining why an empty shell marriage may have developed.
- (b) Successful answers selected two different consequences such as increased need for government support and the effect of divorce on children and described these consequences. Many candidates used the views of the New Right to identify negative consequences, mostly associated with single parent families. Others identified positive consequences such as potential reduction in domestic abuse. Common errors were to outline the reasons why individuals might divorce, explain why the divorce rates might go up, describe a family type or identify a consequence but say nothing about it. A number of candidates only offered one consequence instead of two or repeated their first consequence using slightly different words.
- (c) The most successful responses gave three clear and different ways that career opportunities may influence the number of people marrying. Common answers were that women are now choosing to delay marriage to focus on a career and that as women are more financially stable, they may feel less pressure now to marry. Some thoughtful answers explored how lack of career opportunities could encourage women to marry because of economic dependency. Globalisation was a factor

that many candidates linked to rates of marriage either because it increased it due to meeting more potential partners because of travel or reduced it as traditional values were broken down. A common error was to describe how career opportunities influence women's decisions to have a family rather than influencing decisions to marry. Another common error was to include unnecessary detail on other factors that encourage marriage (which was not what the question was asking). In order to improve performance candidates need to be able to support their points with reference to sociological studies.

- (d) Nearly all candidates included some discussion of how legal changes may have influenced the rate of divorce. The most common answer was that legislation had made divorce easier and cheaper, though only the best candidates referred to specific divorce legislation. Others took it further to show how other legal changes relating to equal pay and welfare may also influenced divorce rates. Some included legislation that has enabled same sex marriage but made no attempt to show how this may influence divorce. A few answers spent too long describing the difficulties of obtaining a divorce in the past rather than concentrating on what has changed to make divorce easier today. Common errors were to outline reasons for individual divorces, explain why it is good to divorce, explain why marriage is increasing or describe different family structures rather than the societal changes, such as reduced stigma, which may or may not have had an influence on increasing divorce rates. A small number of candidates argued that secularisation and the decline of religion are different things. Only the very best answers explicitly evaluated the view in the question. This was often by suggesting that wider changes in society, such as secularisation, proceeded legal changes and so these changes, rather than legal changes, are the main reason for an increase in divorce. More commonly answer simply listed other explanations for divorce without explicitly linking them to the view in the question.

Section B

Question 2

This question was selected by a large number of candidates, most of whom had some understanding of functionalism and were able to outline some principal functionalist beliefs. Most answers outlined some of the ideas of Murdock and Parsons but only the best answers explicitly engaged with the 'value' of their ideas to our understanding of the family. The best answers did this by outlining some aspects of family life that functionalism does and does not help to understand; for example, functionalism helps to understand the importance of socialisation in aiding the smooth running of society but does not help to understand the dark side of the family as it focuses only on the positive side of family life. Many answers also provided accounts of the Marxist and feminist perspectives, with a few also venturing into post-modernism though their link to the value of functionalism was often not explicit. Stronger responses referred to specific thinkers, most commonly Althusser and Zaretsky for the Marxists, and Duncombe and Marsden or Firestone for the feminists. A few showed the theoretical distinctions between functionalist, neo-functionalist, and the New Right approaches and this is a way in which candidates can improve performance, but on the whole functionalism was treated as a monolithic theory. Other answers focused on debates about the rise of the nuclear family, with limited assessment in terms of the challenges posed to the functional fit thesis by scholars such as Finch and Carlin. This narrow approach offered little scope for comparing overall theoretical perspectives on the family. A number of answers were presented in a list like format outlining functionalist beliefs and then a range of other theories many of which contained a great deal of sociological knowledge but very little application to the specific question. Such answers could have been improved by planning so that the answers could have been tailored to the question that was set and as such have received higher marks from application and evaluation. Other answers asserted that what they had written showed value in the functionalist views but without explaining what that value was. Some candidates misunderstood the question and wrote about family members understanding or valuing each other and these tended to go into debates about whether the family is good for you or society or not which was irrelevant to the question, careful reading of questions before writing cannot be over stressed.

Question 3

Also a popular question but some less successful answers relied on personal experience whereas others offered detailed and evaluative sociological responses frequently referring to the work of Palmer, Robertson and Hetch. Stronger responses drew on the idea of nurtured versus nurturing children via Hecht's study of Brazilian street children (for class) and the Beth/Adam doll (for gender) but there was generally a lack of awareness of specific studies. A number noted that social class is more easily changed than gender but none noted that death rates will be very similar in different social groups irrespective of gender. Some more detailed answers used a good range of evidence and concepts such as cultural capital, bedroom culture,

canalisation, gender socialisation, gender scripts and gender detectives and used this to evaluate childhood experiences. A number of candidates focused on life chances rather than the experience of childhood describing the prospect of boys brought up in a single parent family using the work of Murray. Such candidates offered a range of simplistic or anecdotal accounts of how rich/poor or male/female children's experiences differed. They typically made sweeping generalisations about selfish, greedy upper-class children getting everything they wanted and attending private boarding schools, versus neglected working-class children with no toys and little education. A small number of very evaluative answers frequently compared the experience of childhood of working-class boys to middle-class girls and how these factors interplayed. In order to improve performance, the inclusion of specific sociological evidence relating to childhood should be developed. Although many answers compared trends and behaviours the only specific sociological information in many answers were concepts. In order to improve performance, candidates need to pay careful attention to the question. Although it is true that there are other factors, such as ethnicity, that do influence the experience of childhood class and gender were included in the question and so they both should be addressed in the answer. Some responses focused only on one of these.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/12
Paper 12

Key messages

- Allocate an appropriate amount of time to each question depending on the number of marks.
- Plan answers, especially for **Question 1** part (d) and the essay, including an appropriate number of evaluative points.
- Keep introductions to questions concise and focused on the question.
- Include sociological detail in terms of theory and studies, especially in **Question 1** parts (c) and (d) and the essay.

General comments

The majority of candidates seemed prepared for the examination and were able to offer some accurate sociological knowledge. Although it was evident that candidates had good sociological understanding, specific use of sociological studies was frequently lacking. Many candidates included the names of sociologists in their answers, but often without accurate reference to their research or the studies discussed were not related to the question. The most successful responses use a range of sociological evidence in their responses, especially **Question 1** parts (c) and (d) and the essay. Only the very best responses demonstrated strong evaluative skills. Many candidates presented only generic evaluative comments; for example, brief weaknesses of theories discussed, rather than explicitly evaluating the view presented in the question.

Some candidates demonstrated clear issues with timing spending far too long on low scoring questions and then running out of time and leaving high scoring essays incomplete.

The most successful answers usually had clear evidence of planning, for example through a brief summary of points that will be included on each side of an essay.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) There were some excellent, brief answers defining the term as that of couples living together having similar legal rights to married couples. Many answers were longer than is required, for example because they spent time outlining what these legal rights might be. Definitions should be short and succinct. Many candidates who seemed to know what a civil partnership is only gained one mark as they stated it was a same sex marriage and did not demonstrate that they knew that has similar rights to, but is not the same as, marriage. Candidates should be advised that they should attempt to make two points on this question. A number of candidates did not understand the term and defined cohabitation, marriage, same sex marriage or empty shell marriage instead; an uncommon error was to describe polite relationships. A small number of candidates failed to answer this question.
- (b) There were many excellent answers which clearly identified two reasons and gained full marks. Amongst the most popular were economic and cultural reasons as well as 'for the sake of children'. It is always better to pick two different points for **Question 1** part (b) and to identify and then describe each point in a separate paragraph. An uncommon error was to identify but not describe a reason. More common errors were to describe why individuals could not get divorced in the past or describe why marriages are unhappy.

- (c) The majority of candidates understood what cohabitation meant and the most successful of these were able to offer some explanation of why cohabitation has become more popular, correctly identifying trends such as trial marriage, secularisation, post modernism and choice, fear of divorce, the risk society and the changing economic status of women. These candidates could have improved on their performance by developing their points in a sociological way by reference to such studies as those of Stacey and Beck and demonstrating how this may vary in different societies. However, there was much affective use of concepts such as stigma and risk society. Common errors were to describe why individuals may marry or cohabit, outline reasons for divorce, explain why cohabitation does not happen in some societies or explain the supposed decline in marriage which was not what the question asked. A very small number of candidates made the question much more complicated than it was by evaluating if it was true that cohabitation was happening or not. This question only required an explanation of why cohabitation may be happening. Some candidates limited their answer by writing a list of reasons which had led to cohabitation becoming more popular but failed to develop any of them. Other candidates thought that cohabitation means that friends or students were sharing the expenses of a flat underlining the need to be secure with key sociological terms.
- (d) Those candidates who understood the question wrote well about the trends in society which have resulted in marriage becoming less valued and then contrasted that to trends to show that it remains a valued institution. The most successful answers used a range of relevant knowledge such as secularisation, the rise in divorce/fear of divorce and the risk society. A large number of candidates only outlined one side of the debate concentrating on why individuals do not marry rather than evaluating whether marriage is valued or not thereby limiting their response. Common errors were to talk about the family rather than marriage, why marriage should be encouraged, describe different types of marriage, explain the functions of the family with little or no reference to marriage or offer lengthy descriptions about families or marriage in pre-industrial times which were irrelevant. A common error was to focus on the family (rather than marriage) and many candidates just wrote about how the family was or was not valued today. For instance, many candidates wrote that rising divorce rates were a reason as to why marriage was no longer valued and then got lost in long detailed explanations as to why divorce was increasing. In order to improve performance, candidates need focus on the key words in the question; in this case 'marriage' and 'valued' and then develop points with sociological evidence. Whilst most outlined how marriage may be seen as less important than in the past (with more complete answers also showing how it can still be important) only the very best responses explicitly explained how this shows that marriage is no longer 'valued'. A number of candidates wrote far too much and then failed to finish their final question. The majority of candidates made some attempt at evaluation and there was good use of contemporary examples from different societies showing that marriage is still valued.

Section B

Question 2

Few candidates selected this question and amongst those who did there were a number who offered non-sociological responses about family life (or marriage), relying only on assertion and with little focus on the question. The best responses structured their answer around the 'loss of functions' debate. Other responses used feminist and Marxist ideas but few of these directed this to the question affectively. However occasionally there was a response that used this approach successfully, for example arguing that the family has not lost its social significance due to the importance of the family in supporting capitalist society. The best answers concentrated on 'social significance' and showed the skill of evaluation by questioning if the family has lost or retained social significance.

Question 3

There were many excellent and far ranging answers to this question. Many responses demonstrated good sociological knowledge in relation to equality or lack of equality between males and females in the family and supported their answer with evidence from a range of sociologists. The most successful responses referred to a wide range of sociological concepts such as symmetrical families, joint conjugal roles, the march of progress, female employment/financial independence, the new man/new father. They then contrasted this with points on the dual burden/triple shift, Pahl/Vogler, inequality in decision making, domestic violence and useful reference was made by some to the concept of the trailing spouse. Some responses included a wide range of relevant evidence but this was presented more as a list, without applying it specifically to the question. Many responses focused only on the roles of husband and wife in the family, but the best answers

considered other male and female roles in the family by examining gender socialisation and the position of grandparents.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/13
Paper 13

Key messages

1. Allocate an appropriate amount of time to each question depending on the number of marks.
2. Plan answers, especially for 1d and the essay, including an appropriate number of evaluative points.
3. Include sociological detail in terms of theory and studies, especially in 1c, 1d and the essay.

General comments

The majority of candidates seemed prepared for the examination and were able to offer some accurate sociological knowledge. Although it was evident that most candidates had good sociological understanding and a good grasp of sociological concepts, only the better responses included accurate and well-applied research data. Many candidates included the names of sociologists in their answers, but often without accurate reference to their research or the studies discussed were not related to the question.

Some candidates demonstrated clear issues with timing spending too long on low scoring questions and then running out of time and leaving higher scoring essays incomplete.

The most successful answers usually had clear evidence of planning, for example through a brief summary of points that will be included on each side of an essay.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Most candidates had an understanding of an empty shell marriage being the sort of marriage where emotional feelings have gone and many related this to the marriage being broken. The best answers also recognised that in an empty shell marriage the couple continue to live together. Common errors were to define cohabitation, childlessness, separation, a marriage of convenience to obtain a green card or confuse empty shell with empty nest. A number of answers were too long, often because they spent time explaining why an empty shell marriage may have developed.
- (b) Successful answers selected two different consequences such as increased need for government support and the effect of divorce on children and described these consequences. Many candidates used the views of the New Right to identify negative consequences, mostly associated with single parent families. Others identified positive consequences such as potential reduction in domestic abuse. Common errors were to outline the reasons why individuals might divorce, explain why the divorce rates might go up, describe a family type or identify a consequence but say nothing about it. A number of candidates only offered one consequence instead of two or repeated their first consequence using slightly different words.
- (c) The most successful responses gave three clear and different ways that career opportunities may influence the number of people marrying. Common answers were that women are now choosing to delay marriage to focus on a career and that as women are more financially stable, they may feel less pressure now to marry. Some thoughtful answers explored how lack of career opportunities could encourage women to marry because of economic dependency. Globalisation was a factor that many candidates linked to rates of marriage either because it increased it due to meeting more potential partners because of travel or reduced it as traditional values were broken down. A

common error was to describe how career opportunities influence women's decisions to have a family rather than influencing decisions to marry. Another common error was to include unnecessary detail on other factors that encourage marriage (which was not what the question was asking). In order to improve performance candidates need to be able to support their points with reference to sociological studies.

- (d) Nearly all candidates included some discussion of how legal changes may have influenced the rate of divorce. The most common answer was that legislation had made divorce easier and cheaper, though only the best candidates referred to specific divorce legislation. Others took it further to show how other legal changes relating to equal pay and welfare may also influenced divorce rates. Some included legislation that has enabled same sex marriage but made no attempt to show how this may influence divorce. A few answers spent too long describing the difficulties of obtaining a divorce in the past rather than concentrating on what has changed to make divorce easier today. Common errors were to outline reasons for individual divorces, explain why it is good to divorce, explain why marriage is increasing or describe different family structures rather than the societal changes, such as reduced stigma, which may or may not have had an influence on increasing divorce rates. A small number of candidates argued that secularisation and the decline of religion are different things. Only the very best answers explicitly evaluated the view in the question. This was often by suggesting that wider changes in society, such as secularisation, proceeded legal changes and so these changes, rather than legal changes, are the main reason for an increase in divorce. More commonly answer simply listed other explanations for divorce without explicitly linking them to the view in the question.

Section B

Question 2

This question was selected by a large number of candidates, most of whom had some understanding of functionalism and were able to outline some principal functionalist beliefs. Most answers outlined some of the ideas of Murdock and Parsons but only the best answers explicitly engaged with the 'value' of their ideas to our understanding of the family. The best answers did this by outlining some aspects of family life that functionalism does and does not help to understand; for example, functionalism helps to understand the importance of socialisation in aiding the smooth running of society but does not help to understand the dark side of the family as it focuses only on the positive side of family life. Many answers also provided accounts of the Marxist and feminist perspectives, with a few also venturing into post-modernism though their link to the value of functionalism was often not explicit. Stronger responses referred to specific thinkers, most commonly Althusser and Zaretsky for the Marxists, and Duncombe and Marsden or Firestone for the feminists. A few showed the theoretical distinctions between functionalist, neo-functionalist, and the New Right approaches and this is a way in which candidates can improve performance, but on the whole functionalism was treated as a monolithic theory. Other answers focused on debates about the rise of the nuclear family, with limited assessment in terms of the challenges posed to the functional fit thesis by scholars such as Finch and Carlin. This narrow approach offered little scope for comparing overall theoretical perspectives on the family. A number of answers were presented in a list like format outlining functionalist beliefs and then a range of other theories many of which contained a great deal of sociological knowledge but very little application to the specific question. Such answers could have been improved by planning so that the answers could have been tailored to the question that was set and as such have received higher marks from application and evaluation. Other answers asserted that what they had written showed value in the functionalist views but without explaining what that value was. Some candidates misunderstood the question and wrote about family members understanding or valuing each other and these tended to go into debates about whether the family is good for you or society or not which was irrelevant to the question, careful reading of questions before writing cannot be over stressed.

Question 3

Also a popular question but some less successful answers relied on personal experience whereas others offered detailed and evaluative sociological responses frequently referring to the work of Palmer, Robertson and Hetch. Stronger responses drew on the idea of nurtured versus nurturing children via Hecht's study of Brazilian street children (for class) and the Beth/Adam doll (for gender) but there was generally a lack of awareness of specific studies. A number noted that social class is more easily changed than gender but none noted that death rates will be very similar in different social groups irrespective of gender. Some more detailed answers used a good range of evidence and concepts such as cultural capital, bedroom culture, canalisation, gender socialisation, gender scripts and gender detectives and used this to evaluate childhood experiences. A number of candidates focused on life chances rather than the experience of childhood

describing the prospect of boys brought up in a single parent family using the work of Murray. Such candidates offered a range of simplistic or anecdotal accounts of how rich/poor or male/female children's experiences differed. They typically made sweeping generalisations about selfish, greedy upper-class children getting everything they wanted and attending private boarding schools, versus neglected working-class children with no toys and little education. A small number of very evaluative answers frequently compared the experience of childhood of working-class boys to middle-class girls and how these factors interplayed. In order to improve performance, the inclusion of specific sociological evidence relating to childhood should be developed. Although many answers compared trends and behaviours the only specific sociological information in many answers were concepts. In order to improve performance, candidates need to pay careful attention to the question. Although it is true that there are other factors, such as ethnicity, that do influence the experience of childhood class and gender were included in the question and so they both should be addressed in the answer. Some responses focused only on one of these.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/21
Paper 21

Key messages

- Good responses showed a sound knowledge and understanding of sociological concepts and theories.
- Candidate responses to methodologically based questions were more confident than to the theoretical ones.
- Poor understanding of the meaning of some key concepts resulted in poor responses to some of the questions.
- Some of the responses in **Section A** were over-reliant on the stem material.
- The most successful responses contained content that was evaluative and well applied to the question.
- Juxtaposed assessment was the norm in the essay questions.

General comments

Some of the candidate responses showed a very good application of a range of relevant sociological evidence and theory. They also contained evaluative content that was well focused on the questions. Responses that achieved lower marks were primarily descriptive and lacked evidence and/or showed limited assessment.

Responses to **Section A** showed a lack of knowledge of some of the key sociological terms. For example, in **Question 1(a)** majority of the candidate responses did not show an understanding of the term 'social policy'. To a lesser extent this was the case in **Question 1(b)**, where some of the candidate responses did not show an understanding of the term 'pilot study', and those that did, often did not address the question. The focus in **Question 1(c)** was on the issue of the role of values in sociological research. Some of the responses to this question also showed the lack of familiarity with the range of issues associated with this area. In **Question 1(d)** candidates used the material well and majority of the responses showed a sound knowledge of the topic. Generally, there was some over-reliance on the stem material, with many responses using it as part of the answer rather than as a prompt to make and develop their points.

In **Section B** candidate responses to the methodology question were more confident than to the more theoretical question linked to socialisation. There were some good responses to **Question 2** that were both analytical and evaluative. Most of the candidate responses were relevant, though the tendency towards juxtaposition was notable. **Question 3** was answered by a minority of candidates. There were a few very successful responses, with the majority showing basic understanding of functionalism and socialisation.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) The minority of responses that were the most successful defined the term 'social policy' with precision and showed a clear understanding of the term. Many of the responses either defined another term or reworked the stem's content without adding anything to it. Only a few responses gave a partial definition.
- (b) A few candidate responses successfully described two distinct advantages of using a pilot study. Some of the responses outlined what a pilot study is rather than explaining the advantages of using it. The most successful responses structured the answers by clearly separating each advantage and making sound development points. Many of the candidate responses described features of a

pilot study but did not describe and develop the advantages. This question required looking at how a pilot study might improve questions, interview techniques, test the study's feasibility, etc.

- (c) Many of the responses to this question showed a lack of knowledge and understanding of why some sociological researchers might aim to change society for the better. The most successful answers focused on the actual research topics, such as deviance, discrimination or poverty, and showed how these might bring social change. A few of the responses wrote about how some of the key thinkers argue that sociologists should be open about their values and that this should inform their research. On the other hand, many of the responses described some elements of sociological theories without making clear connections to sociological researchers.
- (d) Most of the responses identified and described a range of practical factors using examples of appropriate methods, and then assessed the relative importance of other factors, such as theory, ethics or researcher values. The most successful responses considered how funding sources, such as government and companies, may affect the validity of research findings. They also explored factors such as accessibility to the sample and/or the nature of the study group. Some of the responses mistakenly identified practical factors as a theoretical approach to research itself.

Section B

Question 2

Most of the responses showed a clear understanding of the positivist approach and why they believe that qualitative methods should not be used in sociological research. The successful responses showed a depth of knowledge of qualitative methods (unstructured interviews, participant observation, etc.) and assessed the limitations of these methods from a positivist perspective. These responses typically introduced interpretivism as an evaluative tool and focused on the requirements of the question. Some of the responses juxtaposed qualitative methods against quantitative ones and simply asserted the superiority of the latter. Other candidate responses focused on the qualitative versus quantitative distinction, although some were more successful in linking this to theory than others. The less successful responses did not develop their points in depth and were often lacking in references to key concepts and theory.

Question 3

Fewer candidates answered this question and there were a few very successful responses. Good answers provided support for the functionalist view that external forces drive the process of socialisation, by giving detailed examples to illustrate this process and its links to determinism. The most successful responses identified limitations in the functionalist argument using other theories (e.g. interactionism) or pointed out the flaws in functionalist assumptions about the nature of socialisation. A few responses referenced other structuralist theories, such as Marxism and feminism, but the links back to the question were often tacit. Some of the responses gave only a basic description of the process of socialisation, with a few or no links to functionalism.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/22
Paper 22

Key messages

- The most successful responses showed a good application of a range of relevant sociological evidence and theory.
- Many of the candidate responses applied the understanding effectively to the questions, however candidates should be encouraged to read the questions carefully, particularly for question parts **1(b)** and **1(c)**.
- Some of the theories were understood less well than others, e.g. interactionism. Positivism and interpretivism were generally understood well.
- Some of the essay responses were overly descriptive and lacked analysis and evaluation.

General comments

The standard of response overall was good. The most successful candidates produced high quality responses that engaged with sociological issues.

In **Section A** many of the candidate responses showed a sound knowledge of the key sociological terms and concepts that they were asked to explain and develop. Candidates should be encouraged to read the questions carefully to ensure that the responses are fully focused on the question. This was an issue in **Question 1(b)**, where responses were often generic and did not distinguish the key characteristics of a particular method, and, in **Question 1(c)**, where many answers did not focus their attention explicitly on the interpretivist element of the question. In **Question 1(d)** the more successful responses based their answers on the positivist/interpretivist theoretical debate and applied this knowledge to qualitative/quantitative methodologies effectively.

In **Section B** candidate responses were less confident when discussing action theories compared to the structural ones. This was seen in **Question 2**, which was explicitly focused on action theory. **Question 3** elicited some very successful responses that were analytical and evaluative. Those candidate responses, which focused on the specific wording of each essay question invariably produced assessment of a higher quality. Evaluative content in the form of juxtaposition was seen.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Most of the candidate responses showed an understanding of the term and explained it clearly. Some responses lost a mark through the language challenge of formulating a precise definition of the term. Other responses guessed that the term was related to relationships.
- (b) Most of the candidate responses selected appropriate methods, typically questionnaires and structured interviews. The most successful responses developed these effectively, but a many listed features or advantages, which could apply to several quantitative methods rather than distinguishing characteristics of a specific method. A few of the responses repeated general positivist ideas from the stem or vaguely chose 'interviews' or 'observations'.
- (c) Most of the candidate responses described the open-ended informal nature of an unstructured interview. Many explained ways in which this could lead to more valid data, with some giving

example studies, such as Oakley or Dobash and Dobash. A minority of responses explained clearly how the particular aims of interpretivists could be better achieved in this way. Other candidate responses discussed interpretivism quite well but did not always link this understanding to features of unstructured interviews. The less successful responses vaguely referred to unstructured interviews and one or two of their characteristics.

- (d) Majority of the responses to this question were relevant and outlined the uses of a range of quantitative methods. Many of the responses then juxtaposed qualitative methods in as much detail. Some development was given in terms of the specific evaluation of the particular methods, e.g. response rate of questionnaires or under-reporting in crime statistics, while other responses focused on the wider theoretical debates referencing key thinkers such as Comte, Durkheim, Weber, etc. The more successful answers concluded in terms of research aims. A tendency to conclude methodological questions in terms of triangulation and to see it as the resolution to all research problems was seen.

Section B

Question 2

Many of the candidate responses showed a knowledge of interactionism through summarising the works of Mead, Goffman and, sometimes, Garfinkel. A few responses explored processes, such as labelling or the interactionist model of society as a subjective experience, which helped to address the question more directly. There was a lot of juxtaposition of functionalist, Marxist and feminist models, often without a clear sense of how they related to this particular question. The most successful responses constantly returned to how free or determined individual action is according to different perspectives. The less successful answers simply described socialisation. A few of the responses on methodology confused interactionism with interpretivism.

Question 3

The more successful responses explained the economic constraints of capitalism and distinguished between ideological and repressive state apparatuses. The most successful candidate responses explored how ideological processes were expressed in the family and education, etc., and there were many useful references to Althusser, Cooper, and Bowles and Gintis. The less successful responses described the general Marxist model or asserted the effects of ideology without detailing them. The quality of evaluation ranged from mechanical juxtaposition of feminist, functionalist, interactionist and post-modernist models, to some thoughtful attempts to show how each perspective moderated the claims of the others. Most of the candidate responses did not show a good understanding of the criticisms of Marxism as an over-socialised model of human behaviour.

SOCIOLOGY

Paper 9699/23
Paper 23

Key messages

- Good responses showed a sound knowledge and understanding of sociological concepts and theories.
- Candidate responses to methodologically based questions were more confident than to the theoretical ones.
- Poor understanding of the meaning of some key concepts resulted in poor responses to some of the questions.
- Some of the responses in **Section A** were over-reliant on the stem material.
- The most successful responses contained content that was evaluative and well applied to the question.
- Juxtaposed assessment was the norm in the essay questions.

General comments

Some of the candidate responses showed a very good application of a range of relevant sociological evidence and theory. They also contained evaluative content that was well focused on the questions. Responses that achieved lower marks were primarily descriptive and lacked evidence and/or showed limited assessment.

Responses to **Section A** showed a lack of knowledge of some of the key sociological terms. For example, in **Question 1(a)** majority of the candidate responses did not show an understanding of the term 'social policy'. To a lesser extent this was the case in **Question 1(b)**, where some of the candidate responses did not show an understanding of the term 'pilot study', and those that did, often did not address the question. The focus in **Question 1(c)** was on the issue of the role of values in sociological research. Some of the responses to this question also showed the lack of familiarity with the range of issues associated with this area. In **Question 1(d)** candidates used the material well and majority of the responses showed a sound knowledge of the topic. Generally, there was some over-reliance on the stem material, with many responses using it as part of the answer rather than as a prompt to make and develop their points.

In **Section B** candidate responses to the methodology question were more confident than to the more theoretical question linked to socialisation. There were some good responses to **Question 2** that were both analytical and evaluative. Most of the candidate responses were relevant, though the tendency towards juxtaposition was notable. **Question 3** was answered by a minority of candidates. There were a few very successful responses, with the majority showing basic understanding of functionalism and socialisation.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) The minority of responses that were the most successful defined the term 'social policy' with precision and showed a clear understanding of the term. Many of the responses either defined another term or reworked the stem's content without adding anything to it. Only a few responses gave a partial definition.
- (b) A few candidate responses successfully described two distinct advantages of using a pilot study. Some of the responses outlined what a pilot study is rather than explaining the advantages of using it. The most successful responses structured the answers by clearly separating each advantage and making sound development points. Many of the candidate responses described features of a

pilot study but did not describe and develop the advantages. This question required looking at how a pilot study might improve questions, interview techniques, test the study's feasibility, etc.

- (c) Many of the responses to this question showed a lack of knowledge and understanding of why some sociological researchers might aim to change society for the better. The most successful answers focused on the actual research topics, such as deviance, discrimination or poverty, and showed how these might bring social change. A few of the responses wrote about how some of the key thinkers argue that sociologists should be open about their values and that this should inform their research. On the other hand, many of the responses described some elements of sociological theories without making clear connections to sociological researchers.
- (d) Most of the responses identified and described a range of practical factors using examples of appropriate methods, and then assessed the relative importance of other factors, such as theory, ethics or researcher values. The most successful responses considered how funding sources, such as government and companies, may affect the validity of research findings. They also explored factors such as accessibility to the sample and/or the nature of the study group. Some of the responses mistakenly identified practical factors as a theoretical approach to research itself.

Section B

Question 2

Most of the responses showed a clear understanding of the positivist approach and why they believe that qualitative methods should not be used in sociological research. The successful responses showed a depth of knowledge of qualitative methods (unstructured interviews, participant observation, etc.) and assessed the limitations of these methods from a positivist perspective. These responses typically introduced interpretivism as an evaluative tool and focused on the requirements of the question. Some of the responses juxtaposed qualitative methods against quantitative ones and simply asserted the superiority of the latter. Other candidate responses focused on the qualitative versus quantitative distinction, although some were more successful in linking this to theory than others. The less successful responses did not develop their points in depth and were often lacking in references to key concepts and theory.

Question 3

Fewer candidates answered this question and there were a few very successful responses. Good answers provided support for the functionalist view that external forces drive the process of socialisation, by giving detailed examples to illustrate this process and its links to determinism. The most successful responses identified limitations in the functionalist argument using other theories (e.g. interactionism) or pointed out the flaws in functionalist assumptions about the nature of socialisation. A few responses referenced other structuralist theories, such as Marxism and feminism, but the links back to the question were often tacit. Some of the responses gave only a basic description of the process of socialisation, with a few or no links to functionalism.

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Key messages

- Some of the most successful responses were characterised by detailed sociological understanding and mature analysis.
- The less successful responses lacked references to relevant sociological concepts and theories.
- Candidates should be encouraged to use evidence from sociological studies to support key points.
- Some of the answers to the **part (b)** questions were too descriptive and higher marks could have been achieved by including more analysis and assessment.
- Some of the answers lacked focus on the wording of the question.

General comments

There were some outstanding responses that combined detailed sociological knowledge with thoughtful and well-informed analysis and evaluation. The most successful responses were tightly constructed in a way that demonstrated maturity of thought and careful attention to the wording of the question. Many of the responses to the **part (a)** questions gave a full explanation of the concept or theory on which the question was based, gaining marks at the higher end of the range. Some of the responses to the **part (b)** questions were too descriptive, relying on a summary of relevant knowledge without providing any related analysis and evaluation. Candidates should be encouraged to practice formulating evaluative answers, support answers with more use of evidence from the relevant sociological studies and to draw on a wider range of concepts and theories.

Most of the candidates answered three questions in the time available and there were no rubric errors seen. Some of the candidates answered more than three questions, however, did not achieve additional marks. The questions on Education proved the most popular, with those on Global Development less frequently attempted.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Explain the influence of peer groups on pupil attitudes to education.**

The successful responses demonstrated a sound understanding of the role of peer groups and gave several examples of how they may influence pupil attitudes to education. Some of the less successful answers demonstrated some knowledge about peer groups but offered little explanation of how they might influence pupil attitudes.

- (b) 'Schools reproduce social inequality.' Assess this view.**

There were some very successful responses that discussed a range of perspectives on how schools reproduce social inequality. Good responses also provided a sustained assessment of the view on which the question was based. The less successful responses made little use of relevant sociological theory and showed only a limited understanding of the relationship between schools and social inequality.

Question 2

- (a) **Explain the view that education systems contribute to ideological control.**

There were some successful responses that identified several ways in which education systems may contribute to ideological control, including transmission of core values, labelling, the hidden curriculum, the gendered curriculum, and ethnocentrism. The less successful answers often discussed the role of education in general without linking the material directly to the idea of ideological control.

- (b) **'Female pupils have the same opportunities as male pupils to achieve educational success.' Assess this view.**

Successful answers discussed the position of female pupils within the education system and assessed to what extent they have the same opportunities as male pupils to achieve educational success. There were some very successful responses that differentiated between female pupils in terms of class and ethnicity, arguing that some females have more opportunities in education than others. Good use was made of relevant concepts, such as labelling and the gendered curriculum, to support the analysis. Answers that achieved lower marks often did not differentiate between different female groups and lacked reference to appropriate theories and concepts.

Section B

Question 3

- (a) **Explain the consequences of international labour migration for developing societies.**

There were some very successful responses that explained a range of consequences of international labour migration for developing societies. Examples were often used to illustrate the key points. The less successful responses covered only one or two relevant consequences. Some of the candidate responses did not show an understanding of the term international labour migration.

- (b) **'Government corruption is the main reason why poverty continues to exist in developing societies.' Assess this view.**

The most successful responses used a range of sociological material to demonstrate how government corruption may contribute to the poverty experienced in developing societies. Sustained assessment of the view on which the question was based was another feature of successful answers. Some of the candidate responses distinguished between different types of government, using this to form nuanced conclusions about the extent to which government corruption contributes to the maintenance of poverty in developing societies. There were some less successful answers that described some examples of government corruption without assessing how far corruption is a factor in explaining poverty.

Question 4

- (a) **Explain the demographic transition model of population changes.**

The successful answers demonstrated a clear understanding of the demographic transition model of population change, often using examples to illustrate key points. The less successful responses lacked detail and were confined to explaining just one or two features of the demographic transition model. A few candidate responses showed no understanding of the model.

- (b) **'If economic development is to be achieved, population growth must be controlled.' Assess this view.**

There were a few very successful answers that demonstrated a good understanding of the argument that controlling population growth is the key to achieving economic development. Successful evaluative responses discussed a range of points for and against the view on which the question was based. The less successful responses were often confined to a few general remarks about factors that might contribute to economic development, without clear reference to population control.

Section C

Question 5

- (a) **Explain how the new media have changed the way news is reported.**

The successful responses demonstrated a clear understanding of how the new media have changed the way news is reported, supported with references to relevant theorists and studies. The less successful answers gave only a few general observations about features of the new media with little or no reference to news reporting.

- (b) **'Media content is shaped by a range of different social groups.' Assess this view.**

Most of the answers to this question demonstrated a sound understanding of the pluralist view that media content is shaped by a range of different social groups. The most successful responses also included a sustained assessment of the strengths and limitations of that view. Contrasts with other explanations of media content were often used to support the assessment. The less successful answers lacked a clear account of the pluralist view and assessment was confined to a few general observations about the influences on media content.

Question 6

- (a) **Explain the role of the media in political socialisation.**

The most successful responses demonstrated a good understanding of the role of the media in political socialisation, supported by relevant concepts and examples. The less successful responses offered a few comments about political coverage in the media, without demonstrating a clear understanding of the concept of political socialisation.

- (b) **'There is no evidence that watching violent media leads people to behave violently.' Assess this view.**

There were some very successful answers that covered a range of arguments and evidence against the view that watching violent media leads people to behave violently. Successful responses also included a sustained assessment of the view on which the question was based. The less successful responses discussed the role of the media in shaping human behaviour, with little or no reference to violent behaviour specifically.

Section D

Question 7

- (a) **Explain the view that 'religion is the opiate of the masses'.**

There were a few successful responses that demonstrated a detailed understanding of the Marxist view that religion is the opiate of the people. Examples from specific religions were often used well to support the explanations offered. There were a lot of low achieving responses that discussed the role of religion in general without linking the material effectively to the question.

- (b) **'Religions are male-dominated institutions that contribute to gender inequality.' Assess this view.**

The most successful responses discussed the position of men within religious organisations and provided a sustained assessment of the view on which the question was based. The extent to which all religions are male dominated provided the focus for assessment in many high achieving responses. There were some less successful answers that were limited to a few general comments about patriarchy within religious institutions with no accompanying assessment.

Question 8

- (a) **Explain the links between secularisation and the growth of fundamentalist religions.**

There were a few very successful responses that demonstrated a clear understanding of the possible links between secularisation and the growth of fundamentalist religions. The less successful answers offered some general comments about fundamentalist religions without linking the material to secularisation.

- (b) **'In postmodern societies, religion changes and takes new forms.' Assess this view.**

There were some good answers that discussed several ways in which religion may take new forms in postmodern societies. The most successful responses referred to relevant theorists and examined contrasts between different sociological perspectives on the relationship between postmodernity and religious change. Answers that achieved lower marks often lacked assessment and were confined to general remarks about religion today, with only limited reference to relevant concepts and theorists.

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Key messages

- Some very successful responses to the **part (a)** and **part (b)** questions were seen.
- Many of the responses showed a clear and relevant sociological knowledge.
- Sustained assessment based on detailed sociological understanding featured in the most successful responses to the **part (b)** questions.
- Lower marks were achieved by the answers which lacked references to relevant sociological concepts and theories.
- Candidates should be encouraged to use evidence from sociological studies more.
- Some of the answers lacked focus on the wording of the question.

General comments

The overall standard of the responses was similar to the corresponding examination session last year. There were a lot of successful answers that demonstrated detailed understanding of relevant sociological concepts, theories and showed a good candidate preparation. Many answers to the **part (a)** questions gave a full explanation of the concept or theory on which the question was based, achieving marks at the higher end of the range. The more successful responses to the **part (b)** questions combined a clear understanding of the view expressed in the question with the ability to assess that view from different angles using a range of supporting evidence and argumentation. The lower achieving responses lacked detailed sociological knowledge, and the analysis and assessment were limited in range and quality. A small minority of candidate responses showed a lack of preparation for the exam, relying on assertion and general knowledge to answer the questions rather than drawing on relevant sociological sources. Marks for this type of answers were low and fell beneath the A-Level standard. Candidates should be encouraged to use more of the postmodernist concepts and ideas to achieve higher marks. Answers should also use evidence from sociological studies to support key points.

Most of the candidates answered three questions in the time available and there were no rubric errors seen. Some of the candidates answered more than three questions, however, did not achieve additional marks. The questions on Education proved the most popular, with those on Global Development less frequently attempted.

Comments on specific questions

Section A

Question 1

- (a) Explain how cultural capital may influence educational achievement.**

Successful answers demonstrated a sound understanding of the concept of cultural capital and gave several examples of how cultural capital may influence educational achievement. Some of the lower achieving responses defined the concept but offered little explanation of how cultural capital may influence educational achievement.

(b) 'The role of education is to serve the needs of the economy.' Assess this view.

There were some very successful responses that discussed both functionalist and Marxist perspectives on the role of education in relation to the economy. Successful responses assessed how far education serves the needs of the economy and considered the relative importance of other roles that education performs. Answers that were less successful used relevant theoretical perspectives poorly and showed only a limited understanding of the influence of education on the economy.

Question 2

(a) Explain the factors that influence the school curriculum.

There were some good responses that identified several factors that influence the school curriculum, including: government policies, educational theory, universities, elites, culture, social class, and ethnicity. Less successful answers often discussed factors affecting educational achievement rather than factors influencing the school curriculum.

(b) 'Minority ethnic groups are disadvantaged within education systems.' Assess this view.

The most successful answers discussed the position of minority ethnic groups within the education system and assessed to what extent they face disadvantage in this sphere relative to other social groups. There were some very successful responses that differentiated between particular minority ethnic groups, arguing that some face greater disadvantage than others. Relevant concepts were used well, such as cultural capital and labelling, to support the analysis. Answers that achieved lower marks did not differentiate between particular minority ethnic groups and lacked reference to appropriate theories and concepts.

Section B

Question 3

(a) Explain the limitations of measuring poverty in absolute terms.

There were some very successful answers that explained a range of limitations of measuring poverty in absolute terms. Examples were often used to illustrate the key points. Lower achieving answers covered only one or two relevant limitations. Some of the candidate responses did not show a good understanding of the term 'absolute poverty'.

(b) 'International aid programmes offer no long-term solutions for the problems that developing countries experience.' Assess this view.

The most successful responses used a range of case studies to demonstrate why international aid programmes may fail to offer long-term solutions for the problems that developing countries experience. Sustained assessment of the strengths and limitations of international aid programmes commonly featured in successful responses. Some of the candidate responses distinguished between different types of international aid programmes, using this to form nuanced conclusions about the effectiveness of international aid. There were some low achieving answers that identified a few aid programmes without assessing their impact on developing countries.

Question 4

(a) Explain different ways in which development can be defined.

Successful answers explained several ways in which development can be defined. This often included both economic and cultural/social definitions. Lower achieving responses often lacked detail and were confined to explaining just one or two definitions of development.

- (b) **'Only the rich, developed countries benefit from free market trading policies.' Assess this view.**

There were a few very successful responses that demonstrated good understanding of free market trading policies and their impact on developed and developing countries. The most successful evaluative responses discussed several ways that rich countries may benefit from free market trade and considered whether there are any benefits for developing countries. The less successful answers were often confined to a few general remarks about how rich countries may exploit trading relations with less developed countries, without specific reference to free market trading policies.

Section C

Question 5

- (a) **Explain the digital pessimist view of the new media.**

The successful responses demonstrated a clear understanding of the digital pessimist view of the new media, supported with references to relevant theorists and studies. There were some low achieving answers that offered only a few general observations about features of the new media that might be viewed as negative.

- (b) **'The hypodermic-syringe model of media effects has more strengths than limitations.' Assess this view.**

Most of the answers to this question demonstrated a sound understanding of the hypodermic-syringe model of media effects. The most successful responses also included a sustained assessment of the strengths and limitations of the model. Contrasts with other explanations of media effects were often used to support the assessment. The less successful answers lacked a clear account of the hypodermic-syringe model and assessment was confined to just one or two criticisms of the model.

Question 6

- (a) **Explain the role of the media in creating moral panics.**

The most successful answers demonstrated a good understanding of what is meant by a moral panic. The role of the media in creating moral panics was explored using relevant concepts and examples. Lower achieving responses offered a few comments about exaggeration and sensationalism in the media, without demonstrating a clear understanding of what is meant by a moral panic.

- (b) **'The media serve the interests of the rich and powerful.' Assess this view.**

Most of the answers correctly focused on an exposition of the Marxist theory of the media. The most successful responses identified several ways that the media may serve the interests of the rich and powerful, referring to relevant theorists and evidence from research studies. Successful responses also included a sustained assessment of the view on which the question was based. Lower achieving responses discussed the role of the media in general terms, demonstrating only a limited understanding of how the media operates in relation to the interests of the rich and powerful specifically.

Section D

Question 7

- (a) **Explain why women are more likely to participate in religious practices than men in many societies.**

There were a few successful responses that explored several reasons why women may be more likely to participate in religious practices than men. Examples from particular religions were often used well to support the explanations offered. There were a lot of low achieving responses that discussed the position of women within religious organisations without linking the material effectively to the question.

(b) 'Religion is a powerful influence in all societies.' Assess this view.

The most successful answers discussed the role of religion and its influence across a range of societies, both developed and developing. The extent to which secularisation has occurred in recent times was often used as the focus for assessment in the higher achieving responses. There were some answers that achieved lower marks due to giving a few general comments about the role of religion with no accompanying assessment.

Question 8

(a) Explain the idea that some marginalised groups use religion as a form of cultural defence.

There were a few very successful responses that demonstrated a clear understanding of the concept of cultural defence. These answers made good use of the concept to explain why some marginalised groups find support in religion. Less successful answers discussed links between marginalised groups and religion in general terms, with little or no reference to the concept of cultural defence.

(b) 'The role of religion is to support the capitalist economic system.' Assess this view.

There were some successful answers that discussed several ways in which religion may help to support the capitalist economic system. The most successful responses referred to relevant theorists and examined contrasts between different sociological perspectives on the role of religion. Answers that achieved lower marks often lacked assessment and were confined to general remarks about the role of religion, giving only limited reference to relevant theorists and studies.

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There were too few candidates for a meaningful report to be produced.